

# Effective Relationship Communication

The following communication checklist is designed to assist couples, families and friends communicate effectively when OCD gets in the way.

## REFUSE TO ACCOMMODATE AND REASSURE:

- When in doubt, always ask “is that you or OCD?”
- Statements such as “I don’t know” or “I’m not sure” can take the pressure off of not reassuring without making you feel like you’re ignoring or abandoning them.

## ARGUE AND COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY:

- Make time to cool down – take a walk, go to sleep, leave the room or just listen to music.
  - “I need to cool down before I can talk about this reasonably – we can bring it back up after I calm down.”
- Bring topics up proactively, not reactively.
  - It is easier to discuss things when we are calm and not emotionally invested.
  - “I notice that \_\_\_ has happened recently. Do you mind if we discuss it?”
- When your partner is expressing difficulty or discussing their problems, reflections can help illustrate understanding, demonstrate empathy, avoid reassurance traps, and help you come to a solution.
  - Partner: *I have been struggling to connect recently because I’m so worried you’re going to leave me because of all of this. You don’t deserve to put up with this.*
  - Reflect: *It sounds like the distance I’ve been feeling is because of your worries. Thank you for telling me.*
- It can be helpful to use “I Feel” statements – “When you do \_\_\_, it makes me feel \_\_\_.”
- Avoid “blame language” – “**Why** do **you** do \_\_\_?” “**Why** can’t **you** just \_\_\_?”
- Stay solution oriented: state your needs clearly, simply and remind them when necessary
  - Change is easier when we are given clear instructions: “In order to feel \_\_\_, I need you to do \_\_\_.”
  - Have patience, change takes time and gentle reminders can help us get there.
  - Offer praise when they meet your needs, even if it is frustrating.
- Remember, your needs deserve to be met too!

## BEING A CAREGIVER DOES NOT MEAN YOU AREN’T IMPORTANT AND DESERVING:

- Make time for self-care, “you” time, fun activities, and recovery.
- Caregiver burnout happens when we lose sight of our needs – **making time for yourself is the most selfless thing you can do!** It goes a long way towards helping YOU help others!